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TAGS: [IV](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: SORO'S COMMENTS ON THE OUAGA AGREEMENT

REF: ABIDJAN 242

Classified By: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D.

¶1. (C) Forces Nouvelles leader Guillaume Soro told the Ambassador on March 3 that he was cautiously optimistic that the Ouaga Agreement will move Cote d'Ivoire out of crisis. He noted that, while the agreement dealt with the familiar issues addressed in previous agreements, the Ouaga Agreement introduced at least one innovation: simplifying the identification process by making it possible to register to vote and to get an identity card without first obtaining the certificate of nationality. Soro noted, however, that ultimately implementation of the agreement depends on President Gbagbo's willingness to carry out the agreement, and that the agreement has no mechanism for forcing him to do so. The most serious constraint on President Gbagbo will be the need not to embarrass President Compaore as head of ECOWAS.

¶2. (C) Soro explained that President Compaore will submit the Ouaga Agreement to the African Union with the request that the AU obtain the endorsement of the UN Security Council. President Compaore was reluctant to address the issue of replacing PM Banny, who is named in UNSC Resolution 1721, without first obtaining UNSC approval. If the UN Security endorses the agreement, Soro will replace Banny as prime minister, but only on condition that Soro gets the full authority he needs to do the job. He has no intention of becoming another Diarra or Banny (the last two prime ministers who were completely neutralized by President Gbagbo). He will negotiate directly with President Gbagbo, with special focus on controlling security forces and financial resources. He will also demand the authority to name senior government officials, and he specifically cited the Director of the Abidjan Port Authority, a regular cash cow for the Presidency. Soro said he will not accept the job of prime minister if he cannot reach agreement with Gbagbo, although President Gbagbo made it clear that Gbagbo cannot continue to work with PM Banny.

¶3. (C) The calendar for elections will start as soon as a new government is formed. Soro thought ten months would be sufficient to organize elections if political will exists, but that the process could be extended for a few months if necessary.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Soro was very business-like in discussing the Ouaga Agreement. He carefully avoided gloating, although this Ouaga Agreement clearly puts him and President Gbagbo in the driver's seat, with the political opposition sitting in the backseat. President Gbagbo was his mentor when he was the President of the FESCI student union, so the two know each other all too well. It will not be easy for them to negotiate a power-sharing agreement when it actually gets into the details, and it should be noted that neither has a reputation for scrupulous observation of agreements they have signed. That said, the fact that they have been able to reach an agreement on moving the identification process

forward is a hopeful sign that they are finally prepared to make serious compromises in order to move Cote d'Ivoire out of crisis.

Hooks